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14. ABSTRACT

Future military operations are likewise very likely to include allies, long term partners or ad hoc coalitions, and this can be either a boon or a curse to the operational commander who must take into account political and other considerations when conducting operational planning. In some regards, having multinational partners proves beneficial to operations, but, at other times, problems with command and control, political sensitivities and other issues will cause the commander to question the value of having a partner at all. Integrating foreign partners into the operation can be very complex and requires much understanding, patience and diplomatic skill on the part of the commander and his staff; and many of the problems faced by operational commanders could be overcome early on, during the planning stages, if the staff and commander keep in mind certain realities concerning the ups and downs of coalition operations.

Through the course of this paper, I hope to explore some of the complexities of working with multinational partners and show some benefits as well as limitations. I will open with a short discussion on multinational operations, and also on alliances, and ad hoc coalitions, defining their roles and formative characteristics. From there, I intend to break off into discussions on some specific areas of the principles of war and operational functions where coalition partners come into play and some planning considerations the operational commander should take into account when determining how he can best use them (partners) to his advantage, or mitigate their limitations. I will close with an attempt to gauge the overall worth of partnerships to the operational commander and offer an opinion as to how to start to consider the use of coalition partners.

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Coalition Operations: Planning Considerations for the Good and the Bad

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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10 October 2006

Abstract

Future military operations are likewise very likely to include allies, long term partners or ad hoc coalitions, and this can be either a boon or a curse to the operational commander who must take into account political and other considerations when conducting operational planning. In some regards, having multinational partners proves beneficial to operations, but, at other times, problems with command and control, political sensitivities and other issues will cause the commander to question the value of having a partner at all. Integrating foreign partners into the operation can be very complex and requires much understanding, patience and diplomatic skill on the part of the commander and his staff;[1] and many of the problems faced by operational commanders could be overcome early on, during the planning stages, if the staff and commander keep in mind certain realities concerning the ups and downs of coalition operations.

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[1] Terry J. Pudas, "Preparing Future Coalition Commanders" Joint Forces Quarterly (Winter 1993-1994), p 41.

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History testifies to the ineptitude of coalitions in waging war. Allied failures have been so numerous and their inexcusable blunders so common that professional soldiers had long discounted the possibility of effective allied action unless available resources were so great as to assure victory by inundation. Even Napoleon's reputation as a brilliant military leader suffered when students . . . came to realize that he always fought against coalitions--and therefore against divided counsels and diverse political, economic, and military interests.

-- Dwight D. Eisenhower[2]

INTRODUCTION

Most people who have entered the United States military since 1990 have been involved in one form of multinational operation or another. Whether actively participating in a coalition operation or supporting it from afar, there is no escaping the fact that the US has almost exclusively been a team player when it comes to operational use of military forces. Indeed, beginning with the American Revolution, the military has operated periodically in coalition operations, and especially since the early 1900s, when we took part in putting down the Boxer Rebellion in China and aided the Allies during WWI.[3]

Future military operations are likewise very likely to include allies, long term partners or ad hoc coalitions, and this can be either a boon or a curse to the operational commander who must take into account political and other considerations when conducting operational planning. In some regards, having multinational partners proves beneficial to operations, but, at other times, problems with command and control, political sensitivities and other issues will cause the commander to question the value of having a partner at all. This sentiment was echoed by Lieutenant General Mark Clark in 1944 when he commented, "I was about ready to agree with

[2] Dwight D. Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe (New York: Doubleday, 1948), p. 4.
[3] US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Doctrine for Multinational Operations (JP 3-16) (Washington, D.C.: 5 April 2000), p. B-1.

Napoleon's conclusion that it is better to fight allies than to be one of them."[4] Integrating foreign partners into the operation can be very complex and requires much understanding, patience and diplomatic skill on the part of the commander and his staff;[5] and many of the problems faced by operational commanders, I think, could be overcome early on, during the planning stages, if the staff and commander keep in mind certain realities concerning the ups and downs of coalition operations.

Through the course of this paper, I hope to explore some of the complexities of working with multinational partners and show some benefits as well as limitations. I will open with a short discussion on multinational operations, and also on alliances, and ad hoc coalitions, defining their roles and formative characteristics. From there, I intend to break off into discussions on some specific areas of the principles of war and operational functions where coalition partners come into play and some planning considerations the operational commander should take into account when determining how he can best use them (partners) to his advantage, or mitigate their limitations. I will close with an attempt to gauge the overall worth of partnerships to the operational commander and offer an opinion as to how to start to consider the use of coalition partners.

DISCUSSION

According to Joint Staff publication 3-16, "multinational operations" is a collective term used to describe military actions conducted by forces of two or more nations.[6] These operations are

[4] Wayne A. Silkett, "Alliance and Coalition Warfare," Parameters (Summer 1993), <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/USAWC/PARAMETERS/1993/silkett.htm> [2 Oct 06], p. 1.
[5] Terry J. Pudas, "Preparing Future Coalition Commanders" Joint Forces Quarterly (Winter 1993-1994), p 41.
[6] JCS JP 3-16, p. 1-1.

usually conducted in the form of an alliance or coalition, and we are reminded by both the National Defense Strategy and the National Military Strategy that multinational partnerships will continue to be integral to future operations. Multinational operations are important. In contemporary theory, they offer international legitimacy while allowing the nation to capitalize on the various strengths of a unified effort. Our military is able to operate across a wider spectrum, operate out of forward bases, and leverage particular partner strengths in a synergistic effort to swiftly defeat our enemy. But multinational operations also complicate things for us. No longer can Washington do as it alone pleases. The very nature of the multinational operation dictates that partners also have a say in the conduct of the endeavor. And many partnerships come with strings attached that will have to be weighed carefully against the anticipated benefit of the relationship. Many of these issues are resolved with respect to alliance partners, but with ad hoc coalitions, the issues come to the fore.

An alliance results from formal agreements between nations for broad, long term objectives that further common interests of the parties.[7] As formal agreements, alliances grant member nations ample opportunity to "work the issues" that may arise from combined alliance operations. There is time to conduct training, develop SOP's, and carry out exercises. In essence, an alliance has a head start on resolving complicating issues that an ad hoc coalition does not.

A coalition, on the other hand, is an ad hoc arrangement between nations for a common action. Coalitions are formed differently than alliances and do not rely on formal, long term treaties. Normally, a coalition will be for a single occasion or for longer cooperation in a narrow sector of

[7] JCS JP 3-16, p. 1-1.

common interest.[8] It is the ad hoc, political nature of coalitions that result in many of the problems associated with them, and it is thus the ad hoc coalition that I will spend most of my time exploring.

As one looks at multinational operations and how they impact on operations, it is worthwhile to frame the analysis in the context of the principles of war and the seven operational functions. While the current version of the principles includes Objective, Offensive, Mass, Economy of Force, Maneuver, Unity of Command, Security, Surprise, Simplicity, Restraint, Perseverance, and Legitimacy[9], I will limit my discussion to the principles of Mass, Economy of Force, Unity of Command, and Simplicity. Of the seven operational functions (Maneuver/Movement, Command and Control, Fires, Intelligence, Logistics, Protection, and Counter-CBRN), I will focus on Intelligence, Logistics and Command and Control.

Mass

In discussing the principle of Mass, coalitions are intrinsically valuable. They serve to provide additional forces that can be used against an adversary, or provide forward locations that grant the force commander the ability to move forces closer to the adversary, allowing more of his own mass to be employed in a given area. However, depending upon the capabilities and limitations of coalition forces, mass can become complicated for the commander. With acceptance of a coalition partner's forces, comes the responsibility to protect and employ it, and if that force is less capable, then the commander may have to apportion other forces to help defend the partner force or ease the way for them. Such an example can be seen in the first Gulf

[8] Ibid., p. 1-1.
[9] US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations (JP 3-0) (Washington, D.C.: 17 September 2006), pp. A-1 – A-4.

War, when American forces had to clear the way for coalition Arab forces to liberate Kuwait. While the Arabs were the ones to enter and "free" Kuwait, it was the actions of US forces that cleared away defending Iraqi's to open a path for the Arabs to be successful.[10] In that case, targets more valuable to the Iraqi center of gravity (Republican Guard units) were largely left alone while the focus of effort was on supporting a coalition partner effort because of concerns over their capability to successfully complete the mission. So while the Arab forces added mass to the coalition force, they also complicated the commander's ability to employ economy of force and had the effect of taking away from the US mass available to use elsewhere.

Economy of Force

Having Coalition partners ostensibly grants the multinational force commander great capacity to implement improved economy of force measures. After all, through coalition forces, he has a number of additional capabilities available to him. Some coalition members may have specialized units that are well suited to specific mission areas that may otherwise lack an adequate US response capability. However, national political or legal constraints associated with a particular coalition or alliance member can some times mean the commander has to use a less economical force. Such was the case in the Balkans when General Deverell was unable to use a German battalion in Sarajevo to take part in vehicle checkpoint operations because they were not allowed by their government to search vehicles unless they had received information that contraband was inside the vehicle. This constraint imposed by the Germans' national ROE directly affected their utility and IFOR's capacity to generate military force in the way and in the area desired. In the end, Canadian and British forces had to conduct the checkpoints as there was

[10] Carl A. Strock, War in the Gulf, The Politics of Coalition Warfare (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 6 November 1992), p. 5.

no way around the German problem.[11] It is thus very important for the commander to have a complete understanding of partner-force employment limitations in order to best practice an economy of force approach to operations.

Simplicity

The principle of simplicity takes on great importance when operating in a coalition environment.[12] Whereas unilateral, and to a somewhat lesser extent, alliance, operations are able to take on fairly complicated operations given common training and doctrinal history, coalition partners are often unable to conduct very complicated operations. Lack of extensive combined training, language difficulties, different doctrines and national-institutional biases all conspire to force the coalition partners into simplistic operations.[13] Many alliance members are more or less immune to this problem because the long term nature of their relationship with US forces gives them a chance to build more complex operational and doctrinal interoperability; but newer or smaller coalition members may not have this benefit of historical relationship and military complexity. This is not to say that all coalition partners need be relegated to single step, isolated operations, but that thought must be given to how they are employed in the simplest manner possible suitable to their understanding and ability to conduct the operation.

Intelligence

[11] General Sir Jack Deverell, "Coalition warfare and expeditionary operations." RUSI Journal, Vol 147, Iss. 1 (London: Feb 2002), p 2.
[12] Pudas, p. 41.
[13] John Fenzel III, "Five Imperatives of Coalition Warfare," Special Warfare, Vol 6, no. 2 (8 July 1993), p. 7.

Intelligence is a vastly important function and the gathering and disseminating of intelligence can have a major impact on the success of a coalition.[14] The multinational force commander will likely have multiple nations' intelligence organizations supporting his forces;[15] each one collecting information, analyzing it and passing it on to the coalition. On the surface, this would seem a good thing, as it can and should be. But, many of those intelligence agencies either can't or won't share the information with all members of the coalition as each coalition member has its own "set of rules to follow and intelligence sources to protect."[16] This well stated and widely known problem is not particular to foreign coalition members, but also, and especially, includes the American Intelligence community. For example during Desert Storm, there was no preplanned system or mechanism to release intelligence to other than the traditional allies[17] and that work had to be done once the coalition was already in place and in need of the information.

Coalition intelligence can work quite well for the commander. He can use each coalition member to their strength and gain local insight and specific expertise in an intelligence discipline; and the commander can divide intelligence responsibilities in an efficient way to speed up the collection-exploitation-production-dissemination cycle to support coalition operations. But to make intelligence truly work well for the coalition, the commander must often get personally involved in order to force the sharing of information and deconfliction of intelligence responsibilities. To the extent possible, the commander needs to establish directive

[14] Pudas, p. 42.
[15] At KFOR Headquarters, in Pristina, Kosovo, there were at least 6 national intelligence centers, as well as a multinational KFOR intelligence center, present.
[16] Greg Boyle, Operational Level Recommendations to Improve Coalition Operations in the Twenty-First Century (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 16 May 2003), p. 4.
[17] Pudas, p. 42.

guidance concerning sharing of intelligence information among coalition members and seek to have all members support it to their own national intelligence support bodies.[18]

In a coalition, the commander must concern himself with deconflicting intelligence collection operations, intelligence analysis, production and dissemination. Varying levels of each will have limitations imposed on the amount of allowable interaction and sharing with other coalition members, and many times there will be multiple strata of releasability. It is not be uncommon for a coalition to have three or more groups of nations, each group with its own level of information receipt authority for US information. This becomes even more complicated when a coalition member shares its information with the US at a governmental level, which then can not be shared back with that originating government's nationals because of how we received it. I can remember numerous times working with KFOR when as a US intelligence officer, I could not share information I had received from one ally with another ally, even though we were all part of the same coalition.

Once authorities are worked out, the commander must also ensure that the physical means of sharing the information exists. This refers to communications interoperability and the procurement of technical systems such as CENTRIXS and COWAN[19] for use by all coalition members; a procurement that can be expensive to arrange and slow to arrive.

The concern with sharing information, and ensuring that all coalition members have access to the intelligence information they need takes up an inordinate amount of the commander's and his

[18] General Robert W. RisCassi, "Principles for Coalition Warfare," Joint Forces Quarterly (Summer 1993), p. 70.
[19] John C. Trepka, Coalition Interoperability: Not another Technological Solution (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 14 February 2005), p. 2.

staff's time. In the best cases, it can drive the commander to demand releasable intelligence from his supporting intelligence bodies, or mandate certain types of intelligence collection that produce sharable information. In the worst cases, holding back of information can quickly sour a relationship, complicate operations and threaten the success of coalition operations.

Logistics

Logistics is an intuitively vital factor in operational planning and action, and coalitions play a large role in it, to both its benefit and detriment, depending upon the circumstances. Coalitions have the potential to add greatly to a multinational force's logistics capacity. Partners bring with them the potential for forward basing, over-flight and landing rights, additional sources of fuel, food, ammunitions, and other supplies, and often much needed transportation. But – there's always a "but" – coalitions can also bring with them nightmarish shortfalls in logistics capacity that need to be made up by the capacity or resource rich partners, such as the US[20]

Thus, the management of logistics in a coalition ultimately depends upon a wide range of variables; including the respective partner nation arrangements made, host nation support agreements, equipment and supply compatibility, and more. To begin to frame the problem of coalition logistics, commanders need to understand the capabilities and requirements, the strengths and weaknesses, of each of the coalition partners.[21] With that knowledge, he can begin to manage the logistics aspect of the coalition. Typically, the larger or closer to hand partners will require less support than the smaller, further distant partners.

[20] Silkett, p. 5.
[21] RisCassi, p. 70.

Larger partners may have a fully developed industrial base to supply their needs and the transportation and management structure to oversee the planning and distribution of logistics support. Partners closer to the area of operations may not have as well established an industrial base, but will be able to provide basing, local expertise and other logistical support inherent to their close proximity. During the Gulf War, the "more significant contributions from the Arab Gulf states came in the form of financial backing, the provision of facilities and transit rights for the British and American forces waging the campaign."[22] This cycle was repeated twelve years later when British and American forces again received logistical support, command and control facilities, port access and airbases from the Arab Gulf States.[23]

On the other hand, smaller, less developed partners may require greater support while offering less, tangibly, to the logistics function. They may rely on the US or other coalition members for supplies and medical capabilities, or even transportation into the area of operations, as did Thailand's contribution to Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 when US transportation assets carried Thai engineers to Iraq.[24] These arrangements can some times be worked out separately between individual coalition members, or may require deliberate planning and oversight from the commander. Often, successfully apportioning what can be scarce supplies will come down to the commander and the relationships he has put in place through his command structure, and the level of unity of effort that has fostered throughout the coalition.

Unity of Command and Command and Control

[22] Rick Russell, "Coalition Warfare in Iraq: Then and Now," In The National Interest, Vol 3 no. 27 (7 July 2004), <http://www.inthenationalinterest.com/Articles/Vol3Issue27/Vol3Issue27RussellPFV.html> [2 Oct 06], p. 1.
[23] Ibid., p. 2.
[24] John Roberts, "Thailand sends troops to bolster US occupation of Iraq," World Socialist Web Site (1 October 2003), <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2003/oct2003/thai-o01.shtml> [4 Oct 06], p.1.

Unity of command is probably one of the most important of the principles of war, and one that should be sought after relentlessly. Yet, in a coalition, unity of command may be very difficult, or even impossible to achieve given the many political, cultural and technical factors that play in a coalition setting. Recognizing the fact that a unified command structure may not always be practicable, the Joint Staff in its doctrinal coverage of coalition operations offers different structures for organizing a coalition operation, ranging from integrated to lead nation to parallel command structures.[25]

What forces these multiple organizational options are a number of characteristics unique to each coalition member. What must be the primary complicator is the conflicting political problems and objectives of each of the coalition powers[26] and their political requirements. Whereas coalitions are typically ad hoc creations set up to achieve a common objective, there is often not time for national governments to fully coordinate command arrangements, and so – for political, legal, paranoid, and other reasons – nations refuse to completely suborn their military forces to another nation's or group of nations' military commander. What oftentimes ends up happening is that coalition members will arrive with their own political requirements, control mechanisms, and rules of engagement to which they are beholden. Alliance powers will often not have these problems because there is enough time and formal structure to alliance treaties to work out issues of command structure, ROE, etc.

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[25] JCS JP 3-16, pp. 2-10 – 2-14.

[26] Jacob L. Devers, "Major Problems Confronting a Theater Commander in Combined Operations," Military Review (January-February 1997), <https://calldbp.leavenworth.army.mil/scripts/cqcgi.exe/@ss_prod.env?CQ_SAVE%5BCGI%5D=/scripts/cqcgi.exe/@ss_prod.env&CQ_MAIN=YES&CQ_LOGIN=YES&CQDC=Wed%20Nov%202%2013%3A22%3A41%20CST%202005&CQ_SAVE%5BGIFs%5D=/rware/gif8&CQ_USER_NAME=8455448&CQ_PASSWORD=xxx&CQ_SAVE%5BCPU%5D=Intel&CQ_SAVE%5BBrowser%5D=W3C&CQ_SAVE%5BBrowserVersion%5D=ie5_5up&CQ_SAVE%5BBase%5D=calldbp.leavenworth.army.mil&CQ_SAVE%5BHome%5D=https%3A//calldbp.leavenworth.army.mil/call_pub.html> [2 Oct 06], p. 1.

Sometimes, the divergent pulls of individual national requirements such as ROE can be beneficial to the coalition, though, as they can impart a certain amount of operational flexibility. For example, with rules of engagement, differing interpretations by nations may allow a coalition commander to send one nations' forces into places where his own nation forbids military presence; or have one nation's forces conduct missions that would be forbidden to another because of differing rules. This can make the coalition more effective at times, but certainly complicates the command philosophy and denigrates the ideal of unity of command.

Where these issues hurt unity is when nations' political powers interject themselves in the coalition process. At times, coalition members are restricted from participating in specific operations without first receiving "permission" from their political leadership. This can lead to a de facto rule by committee where "committee members" are hundreds if not thousands of miles away and not particularly focused strictly on the mission. This home nation control can be so common, in fact, that during the Balkans campaigns, General Deverell's NATO colleagues were "sometimes amazed that, unlike them, I am not obliged to call government officials back home on a regular basis."[27]

Culture and technology, too, will complicate achieving unity of command. Regardless of the organizational structure of a coalition force, cultural differences between the partners will make themselves plain very quickly and if not understood and appreciated by the commander and other coalition members, can quickly become debilitating. Different methods and standards of discipline, work ethic, social and class distinctions, religious requirements, etc., can all quite

[27] Deverell, p. 2.

easily work to shatter coalition cohesion[28] and must be understood and addressed early on by the coalition leadership. Technology, also, can separate a coalition into groups of "haves" and "have nots" that will complicate achieving unity. The commander must address this early and ensure that technological parity, or rather disparity, does not interfere with coalition operations. Often this will require the commander to "loan" equipment and sometimes personnel to operate the equipment to less advanced members of the coalition. Obviously, this can put a strain on the "donating" nation, but in the end, helps achieve technological parity among the members which will be especially important in terms of maintaining situational awareness and command and control.

In coalition operations then, what is possibly more important than unity of command becomes unity of effort; all nations cooperating toward a common objective(s),[29] which is, after all, ostensibly what caused the coalition to be formed in the first place. While General Scales has been noted saying that "trust binds the coalition together," [30]unity of effort is greatly aided by a comprehensive, partner-aware command, control and communication system. What I mean by that is that for there to be any sort of unity of effort, there must be a way of communicating intentions, orders, etc., to each of the coalition partners.

This gets back to the discussion on technology, but there is no escaping the fact that command and control and communications systems are vital to maintaining unity of effort and synchronization across the coalition. Some of these "systems" may in fact be liaison officers; these have been noted to be incredibly valuable right up to the present. Other, technology based

[28] Silkett, p. 7.
[29] Ibid., p. 3.
[30] Robert H. Scales, Jr., "Trust, Not Technology, Sustains Coalitions," Parameters (Winter 1998), p. 4.

solutions exist such as coalition-wide networks and special communicating and situational awareness systems that can be shared throughout the coalition. While some nations will continue to insist on using their own, separate communications systems[31] (especially with their own subordinate units), there must be mechanisms for them to easily plug into coalition communications and situational awareness systems. The multinational force commander must take these things into consideration and ensure that all members are able to communicate, that language barriers are overcome, and that coalition synchronization takes place and is enabled by the systems and processes available.

CONCLUSION

Coalitions pose many challenges for the multinational force commander. True, they offer great advantage at first glance; but each of those advantages is hard won by the commander; and at times, coalitions can mean "friction, inefficiency, and the whole amounting to less than the sum of all the parts."[32] The commander exerts great energies on keeping the coalition together long enough to achieve the goals and often deals with many headaches brought on by national capability shortfalls, political prerequisites, personality mismatches and other challenges to full integration. In assessing the various areas that coalitions impact on the principles of war and operational functions, one could be forgiven for thinking that coalitions are doomed to failure or not worth the effort. Yet, with few exceptions, throughout America's experiences, once formed, they work.[33]

[31] Boyle, p. 4.
[32] Silkett, p. 7.
[33] Ibid., p. 1.

As General RisCassi has said, "there is no cookbook approach to coalition warfare."[34] But what is, in my opinion, the single best way to overcome the difficulties associated with coalitions would be a thorough and accurate mission analysis conducted by the multinational force commander and his staff.[35] The analysis should devote as much time to coalition partners as it does to the adversary, and accurately represent respective partner capabilities, political wills and motivations, and national interests of each of the partner nations. Through this analysis, the commander will be able to minimize disruptions caused by political or capability factors. Problems with logistics shortfalls and capability mismatches will become known and can be overcome with appropriate, early analysis. The commander will be able to employ his multinational forces in the manner most suitable to his and their needs, and will maintain positive relations with his multinational commanders. As Sun Tzu says, you must know your enemy, but you must also know yourself; this is emphatically true in the case of coalitions.

[34] RisCassi, p. 59.
[35] JCS JP 3-16, p. 3-1.

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